

REPAIRING THE TEMPLE.

– 2 KINGS 12:4-15. – *NOVEMBER 13.* –

Golden Text: – "We will not forsake the house of our God."
– Neh. 10:39.

THE DEATH of Athaliah, the usurping queen, quickly following the anointing and proclaiming of her grandson, Joash, as the proper heir to the throne of Judah, was noticed in our last lesson. Joash, the new king, being but eight years of age at this time, was properly under the care of his uncle-in-law, the high priest, who had secreted and protected him from infancy. The choosing of this particular time for bringing forward King Joash was no doubt influenced by the affairs of the neighboring ten-tribe kingdom of Israel. In the latter, by the Lord's direction, Jehu had been anointed as the king to supplant the weak and wicked Ahab and to punish the wicked and idolatrous Jezebel, his queen – thus to rid the ten-tribe kingdom of iniquitous rulers, whose influence seems to have been evil continually to the extent of their opportunities. No doubt the success of Jehu encouraged the high priest, Jehoiada, to overthrow the usurped dynasty of Jezebel's daughter and to re-establish the line of David upon the throne. More than this, we may properly assume that as the Lord directed in the anointing of Jehu to succeed Ahab, so he directed in the anointing of Joash to succeed Athaliah, and that the priest was guided by the Lord in the matter, though perhaps unconsciously.

The high priest Jehoiada, as sponsor, made the coronation the occasion for a general revival of interest in true religion and for the reviving of corresponding opposition to the idolatrous worship of Baal, which the pseudo queen had introduced. Inspired by the counsel of the priest, inspired also by the circumstances surrounding the coronation in the Temple court with its reminder of Jehovah, the true God, of their past history as a nation under his care, the assembled people reached such a fervor of excitement for the Lord and against

idolatry that they surged forth, and as a mob tore down the adjacent temple of Baal, slaying its chief officiating priest, breaking its statuary, etc.

Mobs are rarely if ever to be encouraged, but in the present case we are to remember that, under special divine arrangement, just such a course of opposition to idolatry was directly commanded, and that, besides this, the people were keeping under and obeying the direction of the lawfully constituted government of the Lord, in the hands of his representatives, the king and the priest, which government had been illegally suppressed for a long time, and was now merely assuming its proper position and overthrowing its illegal opponent.

The new government, seizing upon the newly awakened religious fervor of the people, proposed the immediate repair of the Temple and the re-instituting of its service by the true priests of God, who during the period of Baal worship had been unable to give their time and attention to the religious services of the Temple and to the instruction of the people in the matters of the Law. Because, being opposed by the usurping government, and the revenues of the people being directed to the support [R3447 : page 317] of Baal worship, the true priests of God and the services of the Temple had been neglected and practically out of commission.

All this was now to be changed, and the government gave commands for the raising of the money necessary. (1) There would be the tax which the Law of Moses enjoined, a poll tax, a half shekel. (Exod. 30:13.) (2) "The money every man is set at," possibly the tithes – one tenth of all the profits of the year. (3) "Money that cometh into every man's heart to bring" – voluntary donations above those required under the Law. The priests were to collect this money, each in the neighborhood and from the persons with whom he was acquainted.

The good intentions of the king and the high priest failed, for fifteen years after this, when the king was twenty-three years of age,

the Temple had not yet been repaired, as our lesson shows. The reasons we are left to surmise, but the inference seems to be either that the people did not trust the priests with the money, fearing that they would use it upon themselves and not upon the Temple, or that the moneys paid and donated were largely [R3448 : page 317] consumed, and perhaps not improperly, in the maintenance of the priests, their families, etc. At all events, at the time mentioned, the king called for the high priest and the under priests to make report why the commission given to them fifteen years before had not been accomplished.

The result of the conference was that the priests in general agreed that the repairing matter should be taken out of their hands and left wholly under the care of Jehoiada, the high priest. The latter arranged a method by which the people of Israel might know that the money contributed by them for Temple repairing would not be diverted to other uses: he prepared a chest securely locked, with a slot in the top, into which donations for Temple repairs could be put. This plan worked successfully and the repair of the Temple proceeded in the hands of competent workmen and faithful overseers. The repairs and their cost must have been considerable, for the Temple was now more than one hundred and fifty years old and had long been in disuse, and it is presumed that many of the stones from it had been taken and used in the construction of the Temple of Baal near by. Verse 13 merely signifies that none of the money was used for furnishings of the Temple until the Temple itself had been thoroughly repaired, because 2 Chronicles 24:14 shows that ultimately a sufficiency of money was donated to furnish the Temple utensils.

CONSIDERED AS A PARABLE.

The foregoing is all interesting to us as an item of history and as an illustration of the sameness of human nature in all periods amongst all peoples. But now let us see what lessons we can draw from these experiences of natural Israel, beneficial to us as spiritual Israelites.

One lesson is that while the High Priest, our Lord Jesus, can be thoroughly trusted in connection with the entire work, nevertheless some of the under priests have less of the self-sacrificing spirit and are more or less inclined to use upon themselves for their own comfort and pleasure means which otherwise might have been better used in the repairing of the house of God – the true Temple, the true Church.

The spiritual Temple and its doctrines, hopes, practices, etc., have become seriously deranged during the long period of the triumph of sin, the "mystery of iniquity," the "mother of harlots," during the dark ages. The Reformation movement of the sixteenth century was bold and courageous, and promised great things in the way of repairs needed in the spiritual Temple. But, alas, the Protestant clergy have used the means and opportunities connected with this reformation for their own personal advantage. Considerable has indeed been done, considerable stir has been made amongst the people, considerable money has been raised, and yet withal comparatively little has been done in repairing the faith and hope and love of the Church, the true Temple – comparatively few of the gross errors have been eradicated.

But here, as in the lesson, the Temple shall be repaired – the High Priest has taken full charge of the matter. The people of God, when they once see the need of repairs and the safety of the channel, will be encouraged to do everything necessary on their part for the accomplishment of the work, and in this work the clergy of nominal Christendom, who should have been active in the service, are being ignored – our great High Priest can do his work without them.

Another lesson we may learn is the association between faithfulness to the Lord and the service of the Lord. As soon as the people of Israel had consecrated themselves to the Lord, and in proportion as they did so, their every source of income would gladly cooperate in the building up of the interests of the Lord's cause. And just so with spiritual Israelites: in proportion as we realize in our hearts a fulness of consecration to the Lord, in the same proportion

everything that we possess is subject to corresponding responsibility. There are the proper taxes or demands upon our time, talents, influence and means for the service of the Lord, and then each may give additionally, over and above this responsibility, a free-will offering to the Lord, according to the abundance of his love, according to the zeal of his heart. And this love, this zeal, and the self-sacrifice to which it leads, measures our devotion to the Lord. Thus the Lord is gauging all who have named his name and professed a full consecration to him – he is gauging their love not merely by the dollars and cents contributed to his service, but also by the time, influence, etc., which they possess and their willingness in the use of these in his service and in the opposition to Satan, and to all the errors of which he is the father and author.

Another harmony in this illustration is that the work mentioned in our lesson was done for and upon the Temple; **[R3447 : page 318]** and so any work we may now do as spiritual Israelites, and any sacrifices which we may now make, are to and for the Church, which is the Temple of God. The work of the present age is the preparation of this Temple; the work of the next age will be the blessing of all the families of the earth through it and its then glorified Royal Priesthood. It is in harmony with this thought under a different figure that the Lord declares, "His wife hath made herself ready." Her chief energy or self-sacrifices are to be on behalf of the Church – as the Apostle declares, we may "do good to all men as we have opportunity, but especially to the household of faith."

It will be noticed that we are not using this lesson as an occasion for the solicitation of money. But while we never solicit, we do realize that there is a special blessing of the Lord upon the voluntary giver, as the original signifies, "The Lord loveth a hilarious [merry] giver." He appreciates, he loves to see in us such an interest in him and his cause that everything else in comparison seems worthless, that our best talents and powers of every kind we will delight to use, not grudgingly but heartily, joyfully, in association with himself and

under his guidance and direction, according to our best understanding of his will, in the service of his Truth and his brethren.

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